



The Neighborhood Connection

February 2005, Volume 2



Presented by State Assemblyman Ron Calderon

Serving the 58th Assembly District including the communities of Montebello, Pico Rivera, Hacienda Heights, Downey and portions of Whittier, East Los Angeles, S. El Monte and the City of Industry

The year started off with special session and the focus of the legislature on the budget and health insurance needs of California. This issue of the NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTION provides information on my legislation and events and discussions taking place near you. I hope you enjoy this edition and look forward to hearing from you soon. –Assemblyman Ron Calderon.

Personal Note: The Metrolink Tragedy

I was deeply saddened by the recent Metrolink tragedy that claimed the lives of 11 individuals in Glendale. In the months ahead my office will work with other legislators to review current safeguards to ensure the safety of railroad crossings and the miles of tracks that run throughout the state.

February Mailer – “2005 Motorist Laws”

Copies of “The New Drive Home – 2005 Motorist Laws” brochure will be made available on February 14th to anyone interested in learning about new state laws that took effect on January 1, 2005 related to owning and operating an automobile in California. You may obtain a copy by visiting my office at 400 N. Montebello Blvd., Suite 100, Montebello, CA or you may choose to have a copy mailed by calling my office at (323) 838-5858 and providing your address.

A Challenge Worth Taking – Health & Fitness

School districts and Offices of Education can apply for the Superintendents’ Challenge if they have passed a nutrition and/or physical activity policy by March 15, 2005. Applications must be completed and postmarked no later than April 1, 2005. For complete instructions and applications, visit www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/ch/ or www.wellnesstaskforce.org. This initiative is a part of the California Task Force on Youth and Workplace Wellness’ 2nd Annual awards that recognize businesses and school districts for their efforts to improve the health outcomes for their communities.

Did You Know?

An apple a day may keep the doctor away, but a good laugh may help you avoid heart disease. Researchers associated with the University of Maryland in Baltimore found that those individuals who are more inclined to see the humor in a situation and to laugh had a significantly lower risk of suffering from heart disease. The study also indicated that laughter may help boost the immune system. So if you want to look at different ways to improve your health, consider reading the comics with your morning coffee!

State News - Tax Amnesty Available

The State of California is offering amnesty until March 31, 2005 to individuals that owe past-due income or franchise and sales taxes. To apply for amnesty and to avoid penalties and possible prosecution individuals can contact the Franchise Tax Board at 1-800-852-5711 or visit their website at www.taxes.ca.gov to learn more. Officials estimate that the “tax gap” (what’s owed vs. what’s paid) is \$6.5 billion annually.



Banking and Finance News

On January 31, 2005 the California Supreme Court ruled on the issue of predatory lending. The State's Supreme Court ruled that state law supersedes local government attempts in regulating the sales of high-cost home loans.

California's law includes limits on the interest rates and fees that lenders can charge on first and second mortgages. This law was enacted in 2001 with the goal of protecting homeowners and preventing any person from losing his or her home to an unethical lender. In *American Financial Services Association (AFSA) v Oakland*, the State's Supreme Court voted in favor of the lending industry's argument that current state laws supersede ordinances developed by local municipalities.

When the state's predatory lending law passed, the members of the Legislature worked closely with consumer groups and reputable lenders to reach a compromise that provided consumer protections while still enabling ethical lenders to serve the subprime market.

As Chair of the Assembly Banking and Finance Committee, I will continue to monitor the state law to ensure that it is providing an appropriate level of consumer protection. The goal of this committee is to eliminate predatory lending practices in mortgage loans and in other financial services while still maintaining a fair and competitive marketplace for financial institutions.

Fellowship Programs

The Capitol Fellowship programs are now accepting applicants for 2005-06. These nationally recognized public policy fellowships offer college graduates a unique experience in policy-making and development with California state government. Fellows receive a monthly stipend of \$1,972 plus medical, vision and dental benefits. Interested parties may apply on-line at www.csus.edu/calst.Programs/programs.html or by obtaining applications from my office or through the career services offices at four-year colleges and universities. The dead-line to apply is February 23, 2005.

Legislative News

I have introduced a new legislative bill that aims to further protect consumer's rights.

AB 175 will provide consumers with additional protections on gifts cards that are usable at a multitude of locations. **AB 175** will eliminate expiration dates from gift cards that display various credit authority logos. For more information on this bill please contact my office or visit my web site.

Final Note

I appreciated your feed back from our first edition in January and again encourage you to call and email me with your ideas and comments for future issues. If you enjoyed this copy of the NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTION by all-means pass it along to a friend or family member! If you wish to be removed from this list or have suggestions for future issues please email Richard Garcia at richard.garcia@asm.ca.gov.

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